

## [Granite Worker]

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Vermont

63 Barre Street

Montpelier, Vermont

December, 1938 The Granite Worker FORM C Text of Interview

Q. Your neighbor tells me you are just back from a visit to Italy. Were you there long?

A. All summer. From May to September I stay in the ol' country. To July we stay with my ol' father in his house, an' then to please Lucia (she is my wife.) we go to live one month with her sister who live in another village a few mile' north.

Q. Did you find much of a change in the village and the people?

A. Of course there is a change. What do you think,- thirty years, they can go by without the people show a change? The hills, the brooks, an' the rivers,- they are the same. The brook behind my father' house, it in just the same, just so deep, just so wide, but not so many fish for us. Once only my family an' a few neighbor' fish there. Now my father catch not so many fish, but he make a little extra money. The rich men, the sport' from the city, come up an' they pay my father to fish there..... When I leave the ol'country, the road to our village, it was just wide for a cart or a wagon; now the automobiles, they can come straight to the village. Mussolini take care of that. He sen' one or two men from the city who know roads an' how to build them good, then he take men from the village who need money, to help them..... Many in the village are poor, but mostly none so poor they have to have th 2 charity. Mostly they can live on their own land; their vegetable' an' their animals. If bad time come, the neighbor an' fren's are all will' to help. They are more generous than

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those pigs from the south.\* They are proud, these village people. They help one anoth'. They know one day they will pay it back. But theyvare ashame' to take the charity from the gover'ment..... I notice other changes, too. Take the childrens. When I was a little boy I never taste no candy but that what you call rock-candy; you know, just sugar an' water boil together hard. Here you buy it mostly in the drugstore. When I was little, an' the mama an' papa go to make purchase' in the town, always they bring back a little bit for us children. An' sometime when we go to school (the school, you know, is in the town) we fill our pockets with chestnuts an' fruit that we have at home, an' at the school we exchange them with the town childrens for rock-candy. But this trip I am surprise' to see that the childrens eat much more candy than when I was young. Un'erstand, not so much like the childrens here, but lot more than in the ol' days. Now the storekeeper in the village, he keep candy all the time. Not expensive kind like the fancy box' we have here in the stores. Just cheap kind. Just something sweet to satisfy them.

\* Frequently in these interviews the informant speaks disparagingly of the Italian from any section of Italy other than his own. Markedly pronounced is the antipathy between the northerner and the southerner. 3 Q. What about the trip, I mean on the boat, did you enjoy it more than you did when you came over the first time?

A. Sure I do. The first time, I have very little money, an' I am scare' to come to this America. Un'erstand, I want to come, but all the same I am a little scare'. I have no family here, no relations, only a few fren's. I come across the water on a French boat, an' I have to share a room with a lot of stranger', but they [?] are all Italiani like me. We are seven of us an' our room is so deep down inside that if the ship begin to sink we know we are the first one to die. Once there is a bad storm an' the waves break the window an' the ocean come in on the floor almost a foot high. We are all scare' an' we all rush togeth' in anoth' room where there are some more Italiani an' we say, "Anyway, we will all go togeth' if we die." But we do not die, an' soon the storm is past. But all the time, day an' night, we

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hear the rattle of chains right under us, an' the machines that groan an' pound like belly-rumbles, an' they remind us all the time that we are deep down inside.....

Q. And the food on that first trip, did you like it?

A. Mostly no, an' not because I am sick neither. I feel good all the trip. The food, it is good; but it is not the kin' I am use' to, or else it is not cook' like I am use' to. Now fish, I like fish an' we use' to have it a lot in the ol' country. Fresh fish from the brooks. But when we have it on the boat I cannot eat it. The waiter, he serve it on a big, long plate; it is a fish, a whole, big fish more than a foot long, an' it is cook' with the head an' tail on, an' just to look at it, it spoil the appetite. The waiter, he keep say', " M'sieu, c'est poisson, c'est bon, Mangez. " But I see that head an' tail, an' I cannot eat. An' I say to 4 myself: These French, they must be like wil' men. It is funny, no? Now I am use' to it; I see it serve' like that in the restaurants here in America, an' it is serve like that in the cities in Italy, too. But me, I cannot get use' to it. Anoth' funny one,-you know I never see an' I never taste a banana until I reach New York? Now I like them. But then, that first mouthful is so sof' an' so sticky, like nothing I never have before, that I have to spit it out.

Q. What about the food this last trip?

A. I like it much better. I am more use' to the fancy food now. An' beside', this time I do not travel so poor like the first time. This time I go an' come second class. I say to myself: You are get'ol', maybe it is the last time you will go to the ol' country. So I travel better an' take it easy. Me an' my wife.

Q. Your son didn't go with you?

A. No. I like him to see the country we come from, but now I spen' my money to educate him. I figure he will go when he make his own money. But my nephew, he come with us. He is the son of my wife' brother Paolo. Mostly he come with us for his health. To rest. An' we think the change of air will do him good. He feel better over there, so he stay' with the

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grandmother for this winter. It is only [five?] year he cut' stone an' already he is not feel good, an' begin to cough. But I think the boy is not strong anyway. Me, I say I am lucky so far, I cut stone more than twenty year' an' still I feel good.